

**Reductions in Drug Use and Criminal Activity  
among Women Treated in the ASAP Outpatient Program**

*Project WORTH*

**Final Report**

**January, 2000**

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## **Methodology**

### ***The ASAP Sample***

- Project WORTH conducted comprehensive baseline interviews with 72 women within two weeks after they were mandated to treatment in ASAP's outpatient drug treatment program.
- In-depth follow-up interviews were conducted with about 57 of the women one-year after they left ASAP.
- This represents an 85 percent follow-up rate, which is extremely high for research with criminal populations.

### ***Data Validity***

All data are based on the women's self-reports. We believe the data are reasonably accurate, reflecting the reality of their drug use and criminal activities because:

- the interview had built in checks to correct serious inaccuracies and misrepresentations;
- the interviewers were highly sensitive to the women's issues and skillful in building rapport and instilling confidence;
- the interviewers assisted the women in developing a month-by-month events timeline (showing birthdays, holidays, and other memorable events in their lives) to aid them in accurately recalling their drug use, criminal behaviors and life circumstances (e.g., time in jail, prison, and residential drug treatment) during each of the past 12 months;
- the women were assured that their confidentiality would be protected with a Federal Certificate of Confidentiality;
- and urine tests were performed whenever possible to ascertain recent drug use.

### **Client Characteristics**

ASAP provides drug treatment to chronic substance abusers with extensive criminal histories and serious psychological and social deficits. ASAP's client population consists of women who are:

- hardcore polydrug users—the women started using drugs regularly (meaning three or more days a week for a month or more) when they were about 18 years old, and most of them were still regularly using a variety of hard drugs (mainly methamphetamine,

crack, and heroin) when they entered treatment about 15 years later. Over half of the women have been in drug treatment programs at least twice before.

- heavily involved in criminal activity—two thirds of the women have been arrested at least five times as adults. Most of the women have committed a variety of crimes during their lifetimes, especially shoplifting, drug dealing, trading sex for money or drugs, and driving under the influence, and they continue to commit these and other crimes during the year before entering treatment.
- victims of physical and sexual abuse in adulthood—about 72 percent reported that they had been physically abused by a partner and 38 percent reported they had been sexually abused (because of the highly sensitive nature of abuse and the stigma associated with it, it is likely that these figures understate the true extent of abuse among ASAP clients). Many of the women are at risk for repeating the cycle of violence: one third of them are at elevated risk for physically abusing their children.
- in poor health, lack education and work experience, and have serious mental health problems.

### **Reductions in Drug Use**

- In the year before entering ASAP, nearly half of the women used illegal drugs or drank alcohol to intoxication at least every other day that they were at risk in the community. (By “at risk” we mean that the women were not incarcerated or in residential drug treatment.) There was a substantial decline in substance abuse during the year after treatment: about 85 percent of the women used substances on fewer than *one out of every four* days at risk (Chart 1).
- Many of the women were successful in either stopping their use of substances or substantially reducing their substance use after treatment: one third were abstinent for the entire year, and most of the others cut their drug use to some degree (Chart 2).
- Many of the women who abstained after treatment reduced their substance use substantially: during the year before treatment, 17 percent of them had abused substances at least three out of four days, and another 22 percent had abused substances at least every other day (Chart 3).

### **Reductions in Criminal Activity**

- There was a substantial reduction in criminal activity after the women left ASAP. During the year before treatment, the women committed crimes, on average, a little over one third of the days that they were at risk. By adding up all of their “crime-days,” we find that the group of women as a whole were involved in criminal activity on 6,650 days. The total number of crime days declined to 3,900 during the year after

treatment. Thus, the amount of time that the women were involved in crime cut considerably, from 37 percent of their days at risk before treatment to only 22 percent of the days at risk after treatment. From a public safety perspective, there was a substantial bottom line reduction of 2,750 crime days (Chart 4).

- In the year before entering ASAP, 37 percent of the women were involved in illegal activities more than half the days that they were at risk in the community. There was a substantial decline in criminal activity during the year after treatment: 36 percent of the women did not commit any crimes at all (Chart 5).

### **Treatment Effectiveness**

- Women who completed ASAP treatment were significantly more likely to reduce their drug use than those who either dropped out or were discharged by the program: program completers reduced their drug use from nearly half of the days at risk before treatment to only 5 percent after treatment, whereas non-completers only reduced their drug use to 16 percent of their days at risk (Chart 6).
- Program completers were significantly more likely to reduce their involvement in illegal activities than non-completers: 50 percent of completers did not commit any crimes during the year after treatment, whereas only 26 percent of the non-completers were crime-free the entire year; non-completers were significantly more likely to commit crimes than were program completers (Chart 7).
- It should be noted that ASAP treatment had a positive effect on women who left the program early as well as those who stayed to completion (Charts 6 and 7).
- Among the women who reduced their drug use and criminal involvement after completing ASAP, about one third of them said that the program helped them “a lot” to reduce their drug use and about half said that ASAP helped “a lot” to reduce their criminal activity. Relatively few of the non-completers who reduced these behaviors said that ASAP helped them a lot (Chart 8).

### **The Drugs-Crime Connection**

- There is an extremely high correlation between drug use and criminal activity: women who used drugs rarely (up to three percent of their days at risk) did not commit any crimes, whereas those who used drugs more frequently (e.g., about one out of three days of the week) also committed crimes more frequently (more than half the days of the week) (Chart 9).
- Women who used drugs more frequently (i.e., about one third their days at risk) were also more likely to say that they committed crimes to support their drug habits,

whereas women who used drugs infrequently (one tenth of their days at risk) said that they did not commit crimes to support their drug use (Chart 10).

## **Conclusions**

- Given their lifestyles, long histories of substance abuse, extensive involvement in criminal activities, and their psychological and social deficits, it is remarkable to observe as much success after drug treatment as occurred among the women who received treatment in ASAP. Many women completely stopped using substances and being involved in illegal activities, and many more substantially reduced these behaviors.
- Given that women who completed treatment in ASAP reduced their involvement in drug use and crime significantly more than those who failed to complete treatment, it is reasonable to infer that there is considerable success as a result of women receiving treatment at ASAP. It is hard to know exactly how much the change in their behaviors was influenced by drug treatment and how much other factors, such as the threat of criminal justice sanctions and their own intrinsic desire to change their lifestyles, also influenced the women. Because women who do not complete treatment are significantly more likely to relapse and recidivate than those who complete the program, it is fair to say that without treatment, drug use and criminal activity would likely continue largely unabated. Thus, we believe that treatment in ASAP, in conjunction with criminal justice sanctions, is effective in reducing drug use and criminal activity.
- ASAP treatment appears to have a direct effect on reductions in both drug use and criminal activity. Criminal activity also declines indirectly as a result of the drug-crime connection (e.g., women have less need to commit crimes to support their drug habits, they may have greater impulse control, and they may stop associating with others involved in the criminal subculture). Thus, to the extent that drug treatment influences reductions in drug use, it also influences reductions in criminal activity above and beyond any reductions in crime that are directly influenced by the therapeutic process.
- Because of the high follow-up rate, one can be confident that the sample is representative of the ASAP client population and that the previous conclusions about the effectiveness of drug treatment are sound.

## **Recommendations**

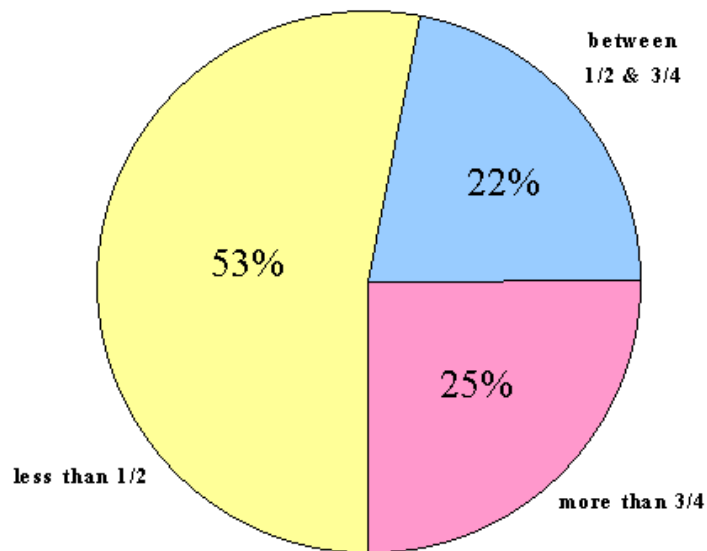
We recommend that the Multnomah County Department of Community Justice:

- continue to mandate substance-abusing women offenders to treatment at ASAP;
- allocate sufficient resources to ASAP so that it can provide appropriate treatment services to its clients;
- and ideally provide additional support to enable ASAP to expand and enhance treatment-related services (e.g., mental health services, childcare, transitional services) for its clients.

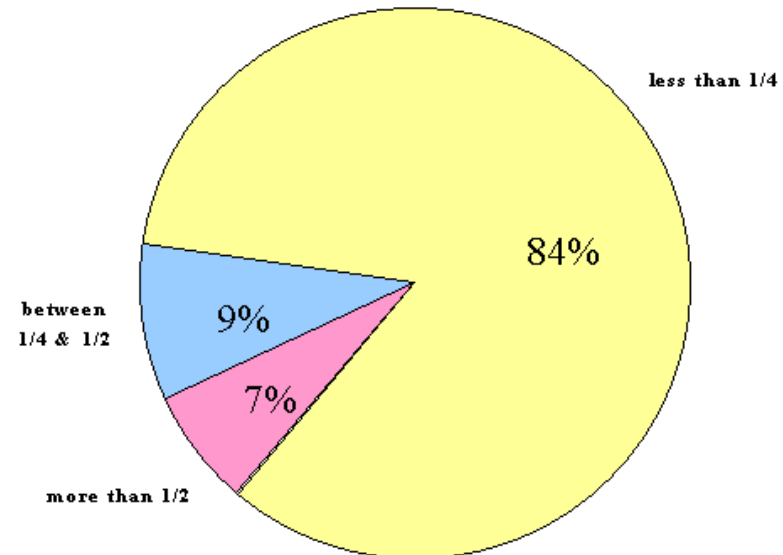
Chart 1

# Days of Drug Use: ASAP Clients

Before Treatment



After Treatment

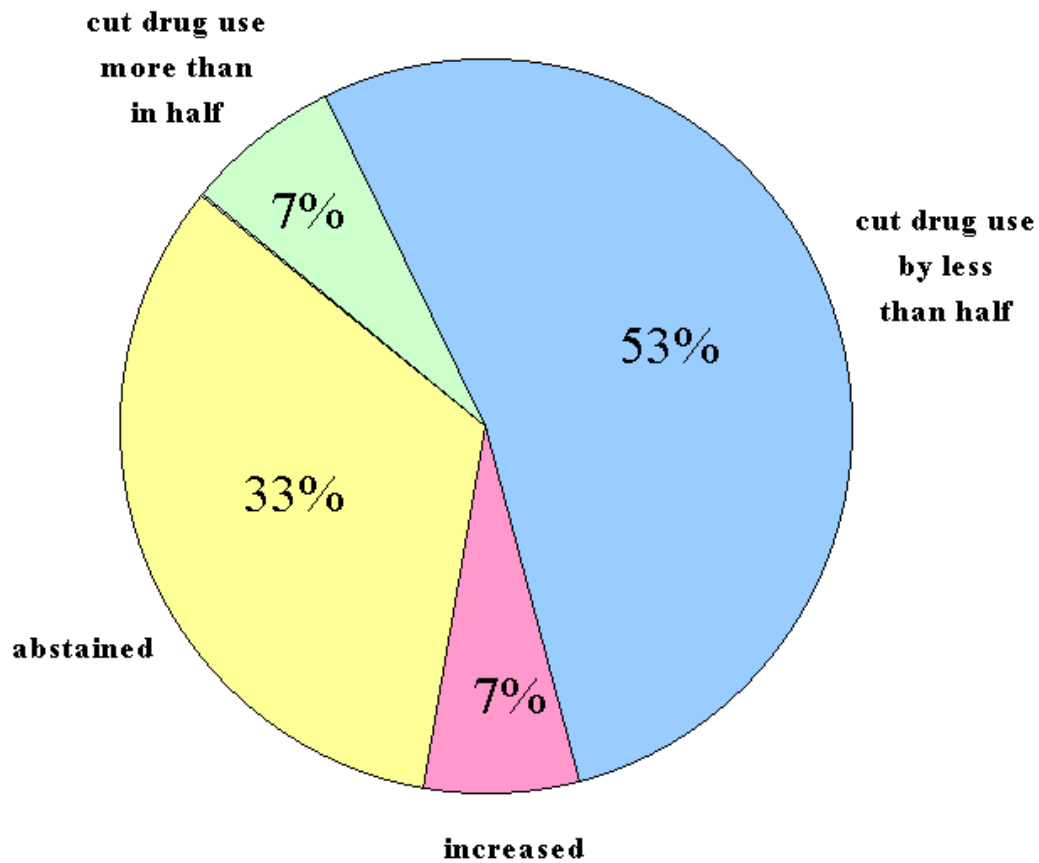


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Chart 2

# Changes in Drug Use after Treatment: ASAP Clients (N=57)



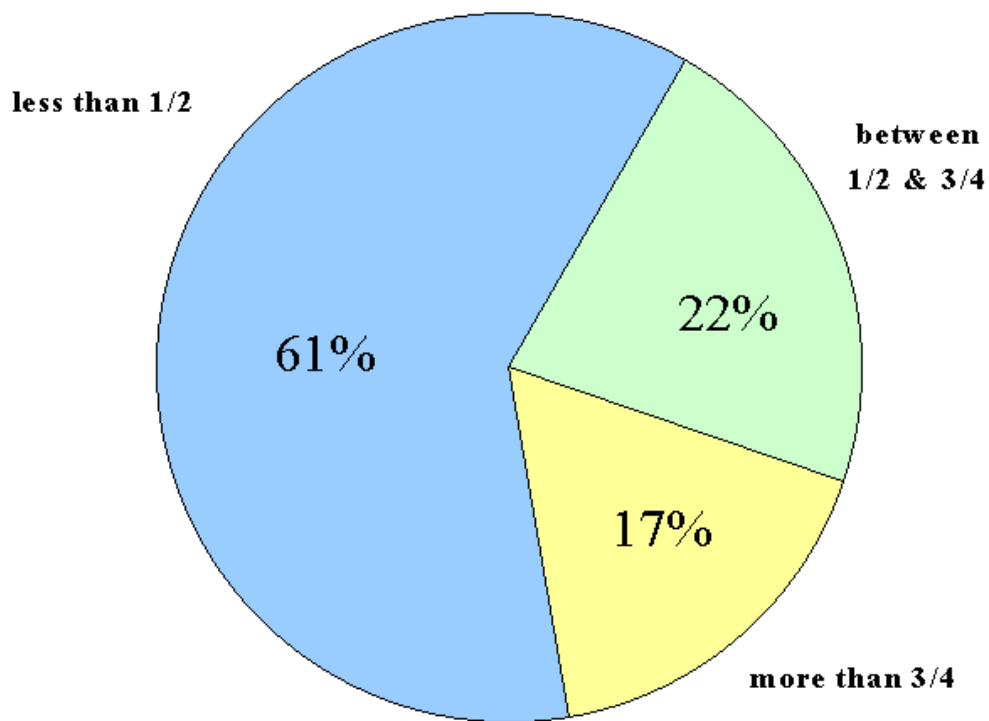
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Chart 3

## Days of Drug Use before Treatment: ASAP Abstainers (N=18)



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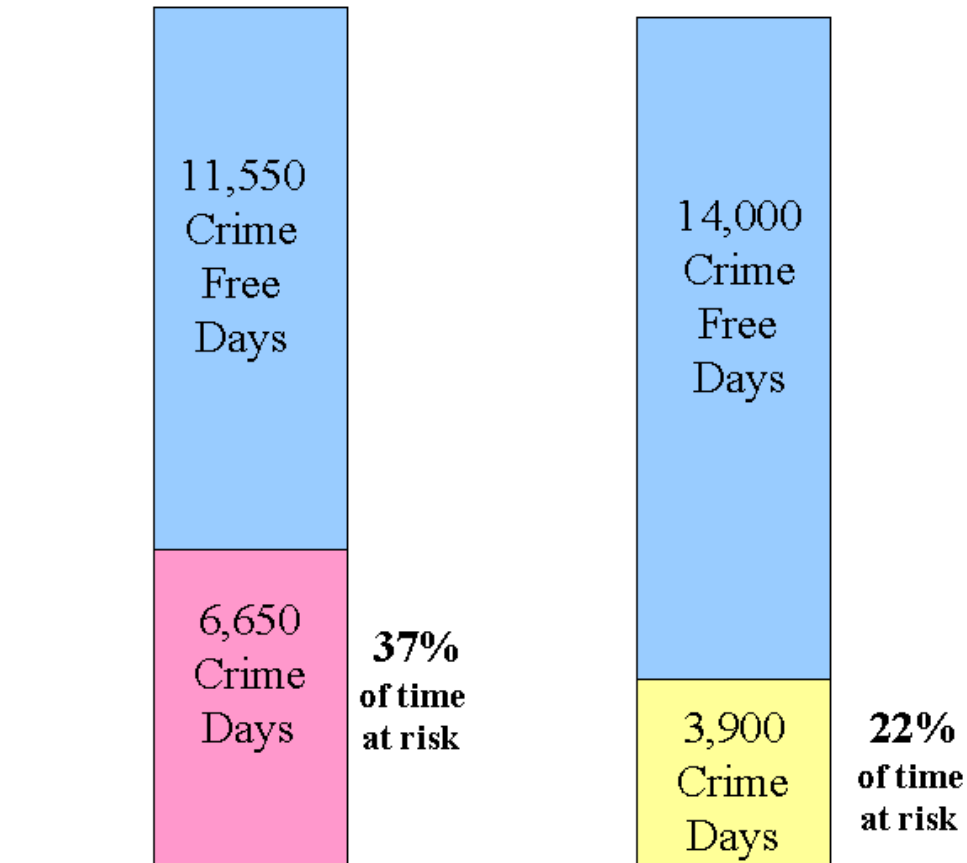
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Chart 4

## Crime Days: ASAP Clients

Before Treatment

After Treatment



Reduction of 2,750 Crime Days

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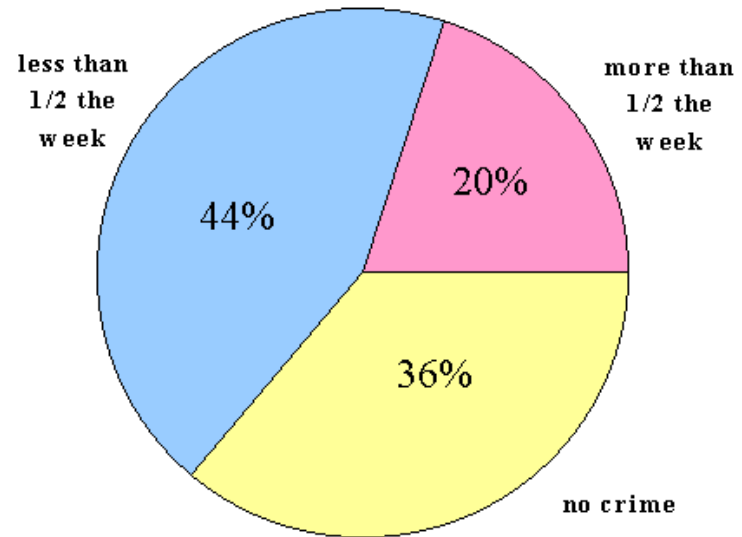
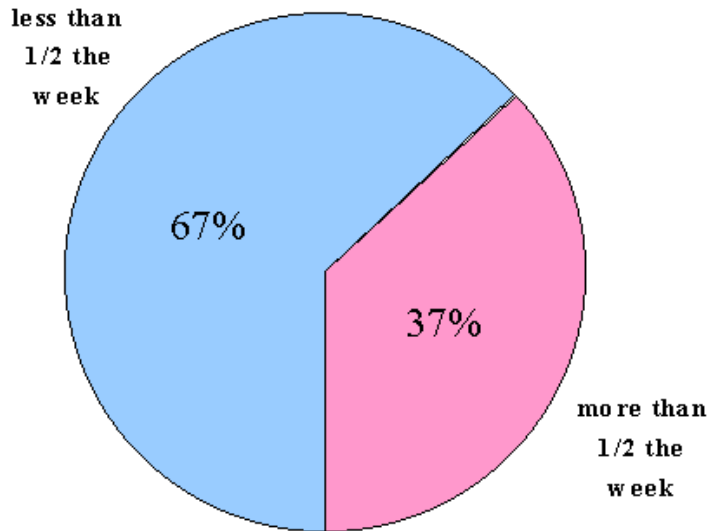
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Chart 5

# Amount of Crime: ASAP Clients

Before Treatment

After Treatment

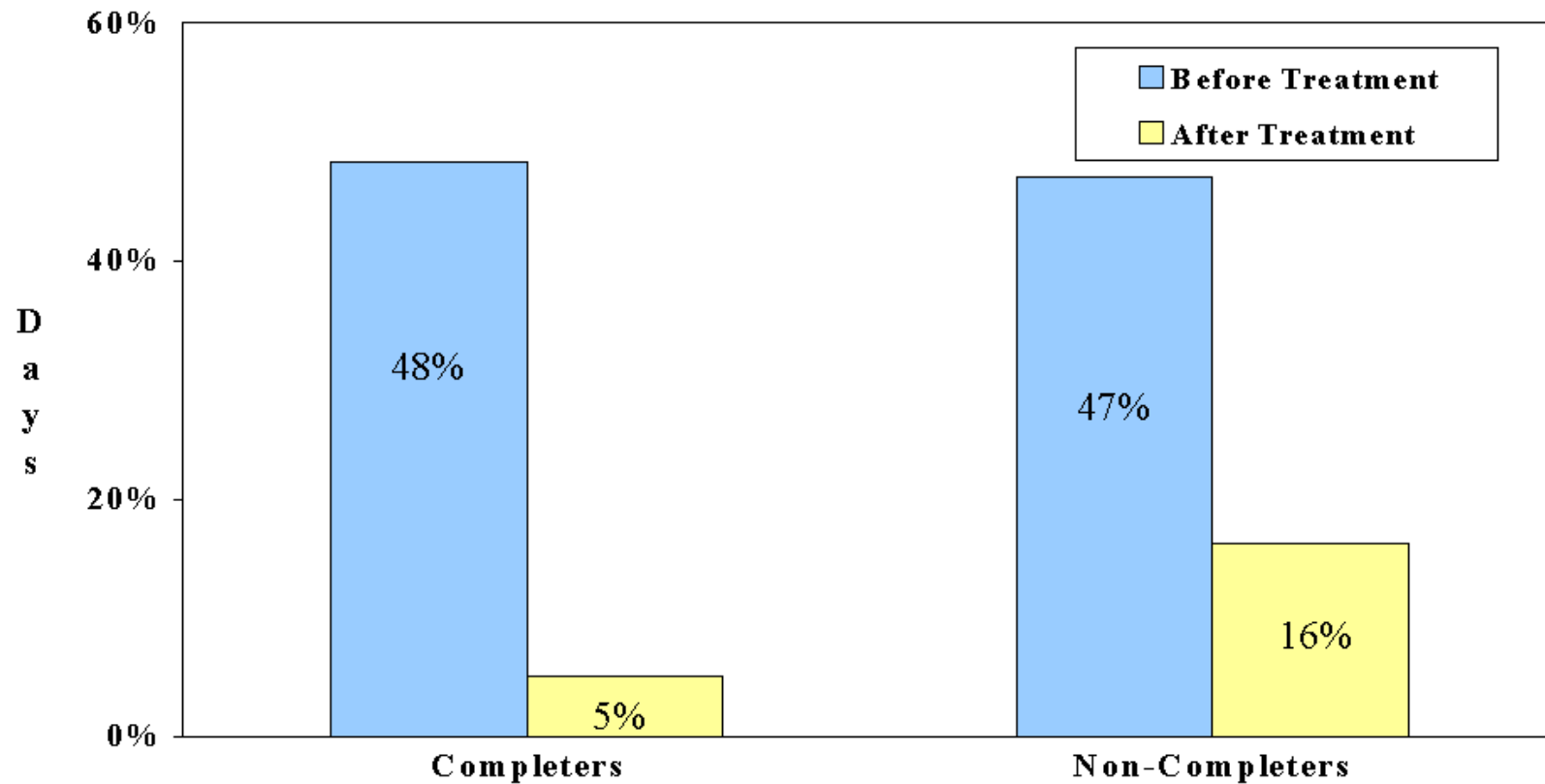


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Chart 6

## Percent of Days that Drugs Were Used: ASAP Completers and Non-Completers

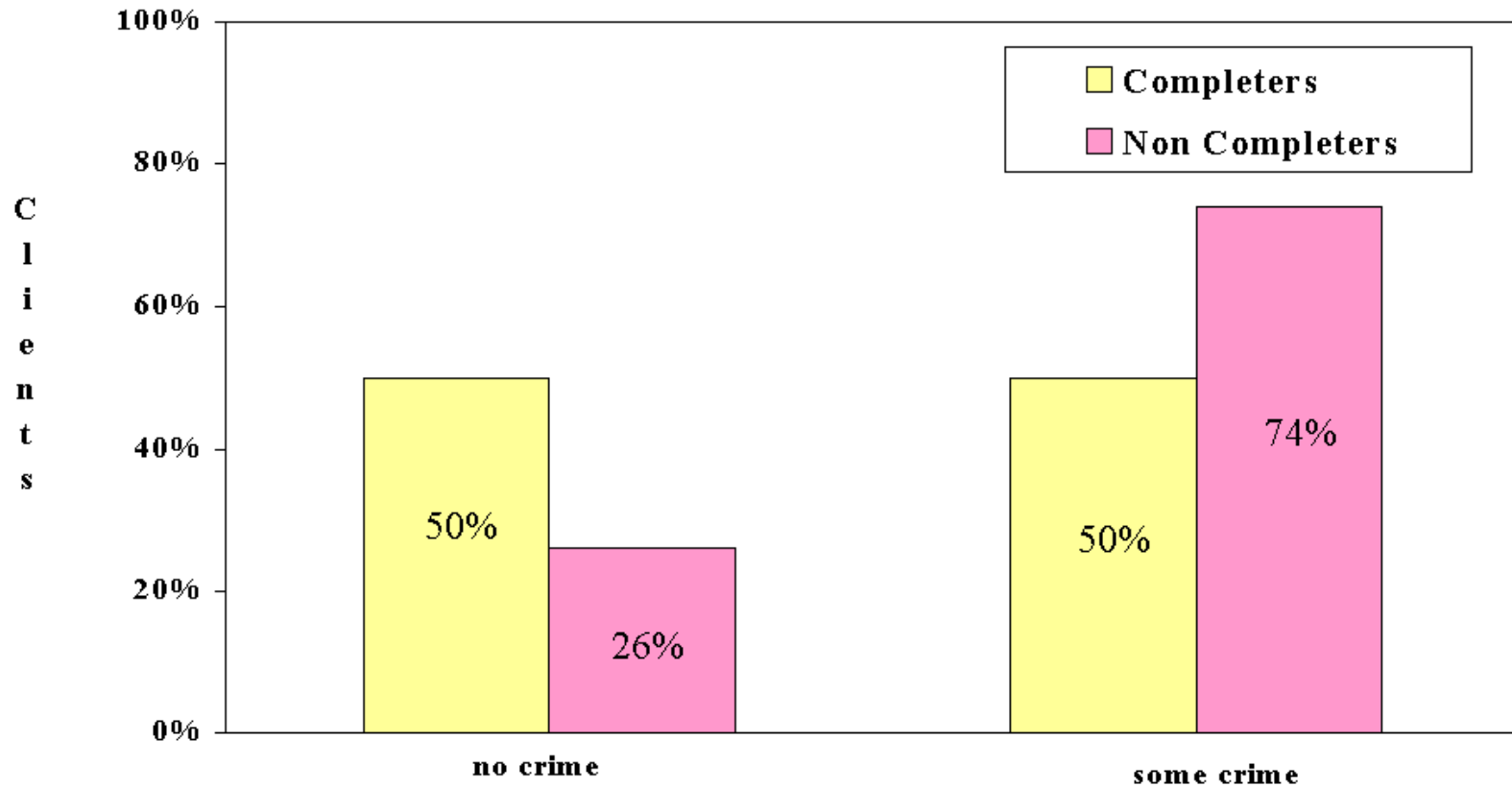


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Chart 7

## Comparison of Criminal Activity: ASAP Completers and Non-Completers

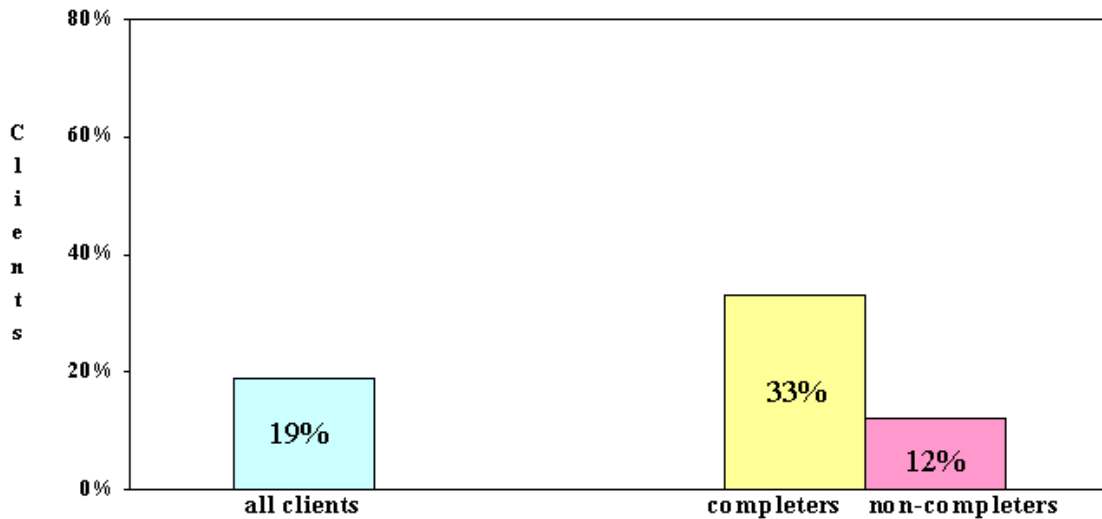


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Chart 8  
**Clients Who Said ASAP Helped Them  
A LOT to Reduce Their...**

### Drug Use



### Criminal Activity

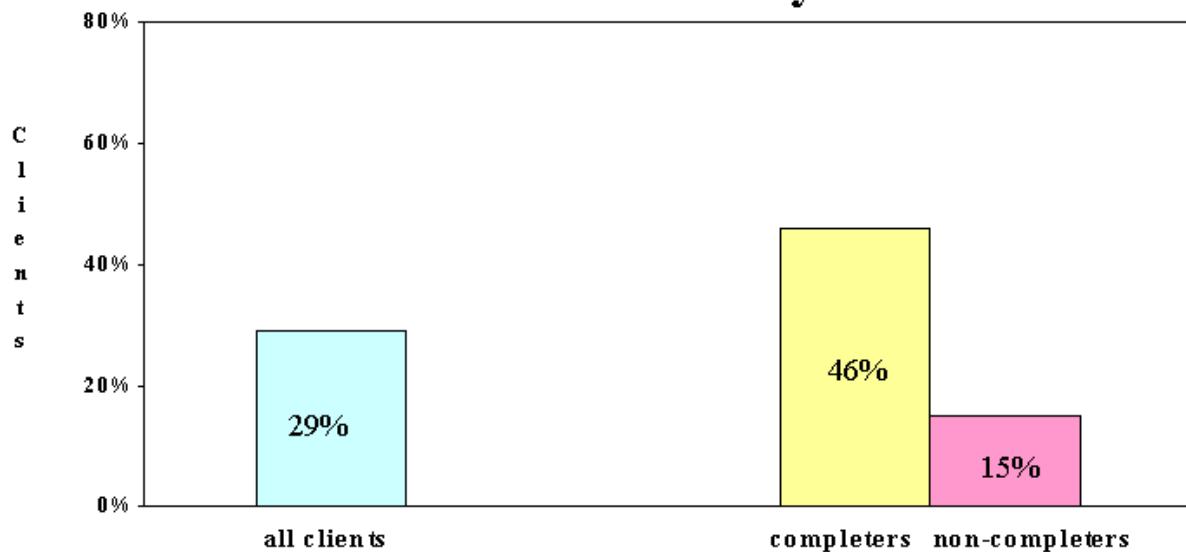
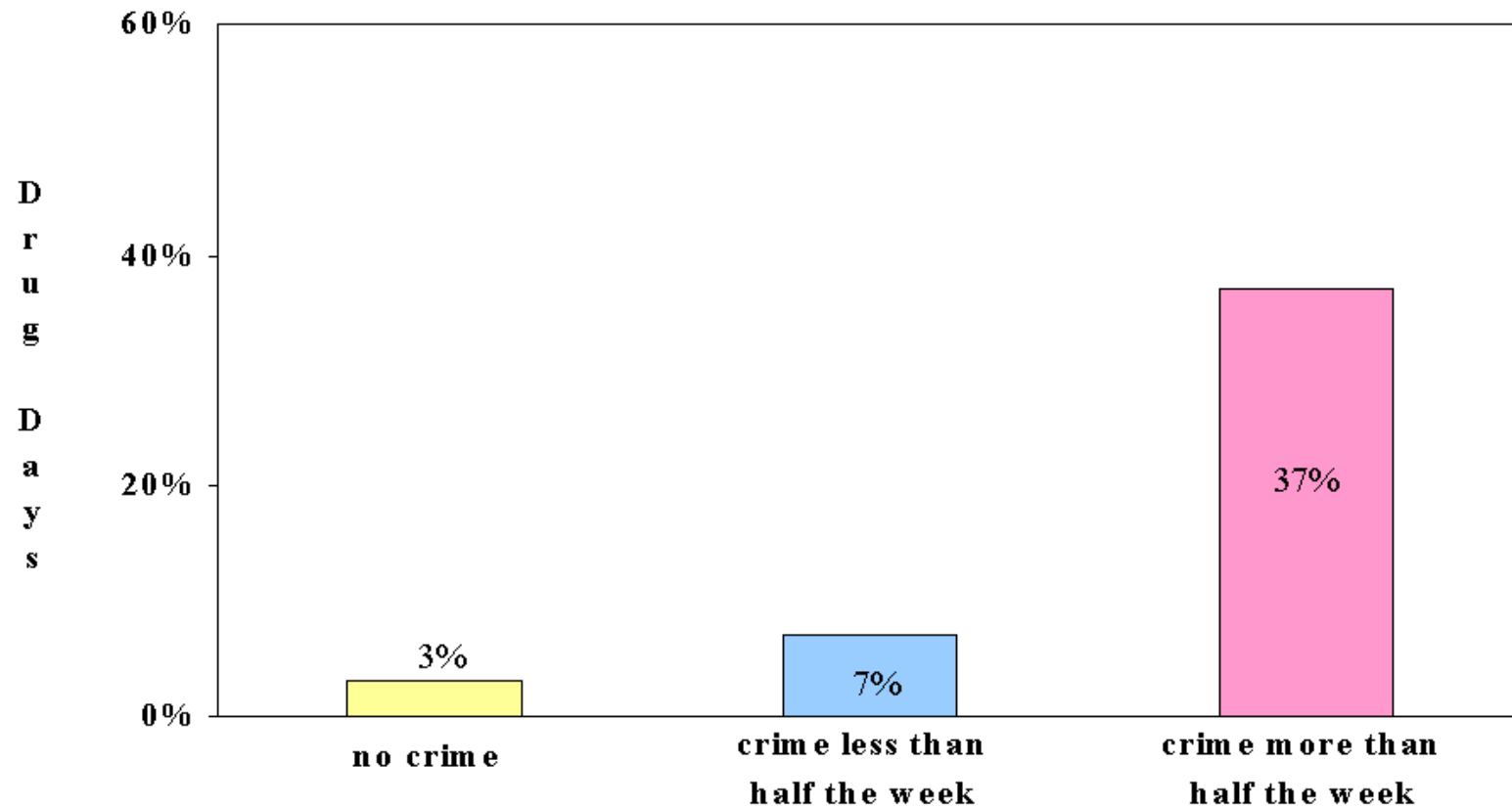


Chart 9

# The Drug-Crime Connection: ASAP Clients

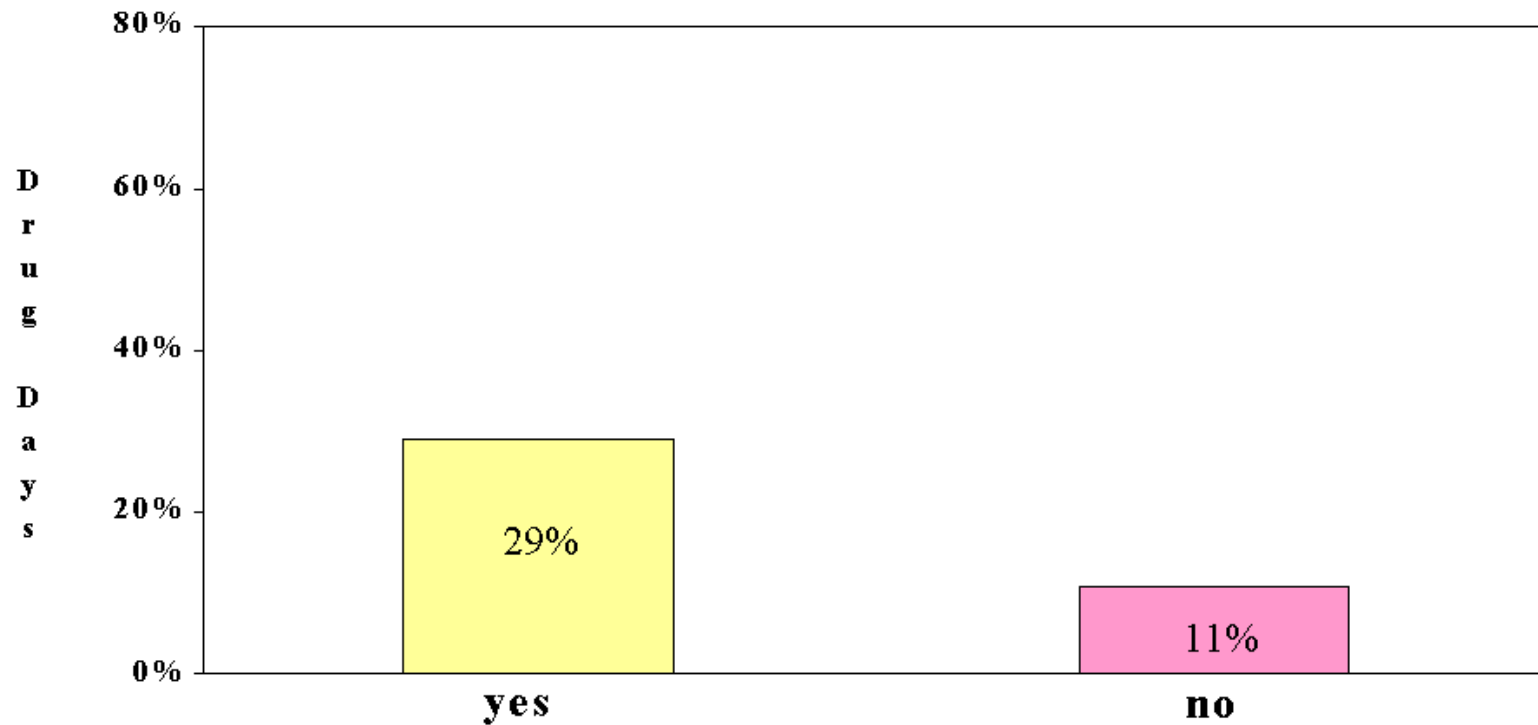


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Chart 10

# Committing Crimes to Support Drug Use BY Amount of Drug Use among ASAP Clients



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